

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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SECRETARY HICKEL USES EMERGENCY FUNDS TO PURCHASE LAND AT OKEFENOKEE SWAMP IN GEORGIA

Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel has authorized the use of \$590,000 of emergency money in the Land and Water Conservation Fund to save from commercial development a 14,465-acre tract located along the boundary of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in southeast Georgia.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a special fund established by Congress in 1965 to preserve lands for recreation and conservation purposes. It is administered by Interior's Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

The Secretary's action places the tract in public ownership. The Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife is receiving the fund allocation and will acquire the area for inclusion in the refuge.

"Under the Bureau's jurisdiction," Secretary Hickel said, "this beautiful unspoiled wilderness with its moss-draped swamp forests, meandering boat trails, and vast marshes and lakes will receive absolute protection and will be developed only for wildlife oriented public use compatible with the character of the swamp."

Okefenokee provides protection for the rare American alligator and is also a refuge for ospreys, Florida sandhill cranes, greater sandhill cranes, and bald eagles--all species which are rare or endangered and need assistance to survive.

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